

The American Community Survey: How the Data are Used

The questions on the American Community Survey (ACS) produce statistics needed to manage federal programs or comply with federal laws, regulations or court decisions. As part of the decennial census program, ACS data help determine how more than \$400 billion of federal tax dollars are allocated annually to local communities. State and local leaders, planners and businesses use the data to help make important decisions.

Here are just a few examples of the questions from the American Community Survey and how the data are used:

Ethnic Origin: Used by the Public Health Service Act to identify segments of the population that might not be getting adequate medical services.

Marital Status: Used by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development to help determine which areas are eligible for Low-Income Housing Tax Credits.

Grandparents as Primary Caregivers: Used by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services to administer the Temporary Assistance to Needy Families program.

English Language Ability: Used to assist with voting per the Voting Rights Act.

Educational Attainment: Used to distribute funds to school districts for adult education.

Residence One Year Ago: Used by numerous federal programs concerned with employment, housing, education and the elderly.

Commute to Work: Used as the basis for transportation planning by state departments of transportation and the more than 350 metropolitan planning organizations.

Plumbing and Kitchen Facilities: Used by federal programs that distribute housing grants to state and local areas.

An explanation of the purpose of every question on the survey can be found in the “Background” section of the ACS online Media Tool Kit (accessible via www.census.gov/ACS).

TOPICS in the American Community Survey

Social Characteristics:

- Marital Status
- Marital History
- Fertility
- Grandparents as Caregivers
- Ancestry
- Place of Birth, U.S. Citizenship and Year of Entry
- Language Spoken at Home
- Educational Attainment and School Enrollment
- Bachelor Degree Major(s)*
- Residence One Year Ago
- Veteran Status: Disability Rating and Period of Service

Economic Characteristics:

- Income
- Food Stamps Benefit
- Labor Force Status
- Industry, Occupation, and Class of Worker
- Place of Work and Journey to Work
- Work Status Last Year
- Vehicles Available
- Health Insurance Coverage

Housing Characteristics:

- Year Structure Built
- Units in Structure
- Year Moved into Unit
- Rooms
- Bedrooms
- Plumbing / Kitchen Facilities
- House Heating Fuel
- Telephone Service Available
- Tenure
- Home Value
- Rent
- Mortgage Status
- Selected Monthly Owner Costs

Demographic Characteristics:

- Age
- Sex
- Hispanic Origin
- Race
- Relationship

** New for the 2009 American Community Survey*

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